

Message Text

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ACTION IO-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 /087 W
----- 085276

R 201532Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6668
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
US MISSION 1644
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PORG, MT
SUBJECT: MALTA ADMITTED INTO GROUP OF 77

REF: VALLETTA 0082; USUN 0599

1. MALTA'S FORMAL ADMISSION INTO FULL MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP OF 77 AT THE RECENT CONFERENCE IN MANILA HAS BEEN HAILED IN MALTA AS "ANOTHER DIPLOMATIC TRIUMPH" AND AS VINDICATION OF MINTOFF'S NON-ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY.
2. IN REPORTING TO THE MALTESE PARLIAMENT ON THE MANILA CONFERENCE, THE HEAD OF THE MALTESE DELEGATION, MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE JOE CASSAR, SKETCHED THE BACKGROUND OF THE PRESENT SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO WIN ADMISSION TO THE GROUP OF 77 AND CRITICIZED THE PREVIOUS NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT FOR ITS FAILURE TO TAKE THIS STEP WHEN IT WAS IN POWER. AS A RESULT OF THIS NATIONALIST "FAILURE," CASSAR SAID, THE SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT ON ASSUMING OFFICE IN 1971 "FOUND ITSELF

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INCLUDED IN ANOTHER GROUP COMPOSED OF RICH AND DEVELOPED

COUNTRIES WHICH NOT ONLY DO NOT NEED OUTSIDE AID BUT
WHICH ARE IN DUTY BOUND TO HELP OTHERS."

3. CASSAR DEFINED MALTA'S NEW MEMBERSHIP IN THE GROUP OF 77 AS "AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THE POLICY OF THE SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT TO OBTAIN FOR MALTA THE AID REQUIRED FOR ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT." HE SAID THAT IF MALTA HAD BEEN A MEMBER OF THE GROUP IN JULY, 1974, "THE UNITED NATIONS SEABED AUTHORITY HEADQUARTERS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE BEEN SITED IN MALTA RATHER THAN JAMAICA." CASSAR THANKED THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH ASSISTED MALTA IN WINNING ADMISSION--"ESPECIALLY OUR FRIENDS -- ARAB COUNTRIES AND ESPECIALLY LIBYA."

4. NATIONALIST OPPOSITION LEADER BORG OLIVIER, WHILE TAKING MILD EXCEPTION TO CASSAR'S CRITICISM OF THE FORMER GOVERNMENT HE HEADED AS PRIME MINISTER, NEVERTHELESS "EXPRESSED SATISFACTION" AT MALTA'S ACCEPTANCE IN THE GROUP OF 77.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SOME NATIONALIST MAY GRUMBLE TO US PRIVATELY ABOUT MALTA'S BEING LUMPED WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP OF 77, MOST TAKE THE MORE PRAGMATIC VIEW THAT SINCE THEY CONSIDER MALTA IS STILL A DEVELOPING COUNTRY, THE MOVE IS PROBABLY WISE IF MALTA CAN IN FACT DERIVE REAL BENEFITS FROM MEMBERSHIP. CERTAINLY THIS SUCCESSFUL CULMINATION OF A 4-YEAR EFFORT TO WIN ADMISSION WILL BE USED SKILLFULLY BY MINTOFF TO HIS ADVANTAGE IN THE COMING GENERAL ELECTION. SMITH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NOMINATION, MEETINGS, ELECTIONS, DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976VALLET00212
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760066-1047
From: VALLETTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760228/aaaaaxzw.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 VALLETTA 82
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 MAY 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <02 JUL 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MALTA ADMITTED INTO GROUP OF 77
TAGS: PFOR, PORG, MT
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006